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# Prospects for Reagan-Gorbachev summit brighten

## News items undercut views of arms control naysayers

By Joseph C. Harsch

Three items in the news this week have been of particular importance to the prospects for another summit conference and what might happen in superpower relations at future summits between Ronald Reagan and Mikhail Gorbachev, if they occur.

Those in the Reagan administration who oppose arms control agreements with the Soviets, business with the Soviets, and summits have based their case mainly on the double contention that the Soviets are running ahead of the United States in the arms race and, in the process, cheating on the arms control agreements which exist.

Over the past week the following news items undercut those major contentions of the anti-arms control faction in the administration:

- Recent testimony before congressional committees shows the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) agreeing substantially that Soviet spending on weapons has been relatively constant over the last decade and is likely in the near future to remain constant and may even decline.

- Donald Hicks, undersecretary of defense for research and engineering, submitted an annual report to Congress on the race in military technology. It showed the US leading the USSR in the 14 most important areas of military technology, the US trailing the USSR in none, and the Soviets trying to catch up, but with little success. The Soviets have narrowed their disadvantage in four categories, but are falling further behind in one.

- The CIA has revised its method for calculating Soviet nuclear tests. The old method showed the Soviets to be cheating on the tests. The new method reduces estimates of Soviet yield by 20 percent and indicates that they may not have cheated. News reports said that William Casey, the CIA director, approved the downward revision on Jan. 21, over protests from Richard Perle, undersecretary of defense for international security policy. Mr. Perle has been the administration's most active and influential opponent of arms control agreements with the Soviets.

These three events strengthen the hands of those in the administration who favor going ahead with summit conferences and with efforts to reach new agreements on arms control with the Soviets. They weaken the hand of those led by Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger and Mr. Perle, who say that any agreement with the Soviets would be to the US's disadvantage and that the Soviets routinely cheat on such agreements.

5 The three items together improve the chances that

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there will be a second Reagan-Gorbachev summit and that, despite present indications to the contrary, Reagan would be willing to consider the possibility of a new arms control agreement.

This week, Mr. Reagan refused Mr. Gorbachev's proposal for an extra and special summit in Europe soon to consider a nuclear test ban treaty. The blunt and quick refusal by the US chalked up a propaganda plus for the USSR. It created the appearance of greater interest in peacefulness in Moscow than in Washington.

But Reagan reasserted his desire to go ahead with summitry, although he refused to agree in advance to do anything about arms control. In effect, he is in the position of saying that he won't pay a price in advance just to get a summit. But the idea of a summit is alive, and so is the possibility that the sequence of summits sketched out last November in Geneva (one in the US this year and another in Moscow next year) could lead to an easier

Soviet-US relationship, including a new arms control agreement.

The revised opinions about Soviet arms building and Soviet violations represent a push by lower level experts and technicians to get information into public notice that challenges US assumptions about such matters.

The great arms buildup campaign has been largely based on the double contention of Soviets outbuilding the US and cheating in the process. The CIA did not publicize its revised methods for measuring Soviet underground nuclear tests. Presumably someone at the technical level at the CIA or in the higher echelons at the White House, leaked the information. The changed estimates on Soviet spending on arms and the Hicks report on the US lead in military technology were made public by congressional committees. Of particular interest is the substantial concurrence of the DIA in the CIA estimates. In the past, the DIA has usually estimated Soviet arms spending well above CIA estimates. Mr. Weinberger has used the higher DIA estimates to support his contention that the Soviets are

continuing to seek "a very significant, exploitable, military advantage."

If Soviet spending on arms has been level over the past 10 years and may even decline in the future, there is reasonable doubt that Moscow is trying very hard to secure any new advantages. Also, if US technology is well ahead of the Soviets in all main categories of weapons, and is keeping ahead, then it would follow that Soviet superiority in numbers of weapons becomes of declining importance.

The surfacing of these changes in Washington's appreciation of the Soviet "threat" means that a less ominous picture of the situation is reaching both Congress and the upper levels of the White House. That helps to clear the way for another summit — which the Soviets seem to want.

Meanwhile, two of Mr. Reagan's little wars ended as abruptly as they had erupted the previous week. The US Sixth Fleet was back in mid-Mediterranean and beyond range of Col. Muammar Qaddafi's missiles. And Honduran soldiers ferried by US air transport to the Nicaraguan border were sitting there unmolested.